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L I B R A R Y



# **GREENRIVER SCHOOL**

**A Massachusetts Regional Charter School**

**located in  
Great Barrington, Massachusetts**

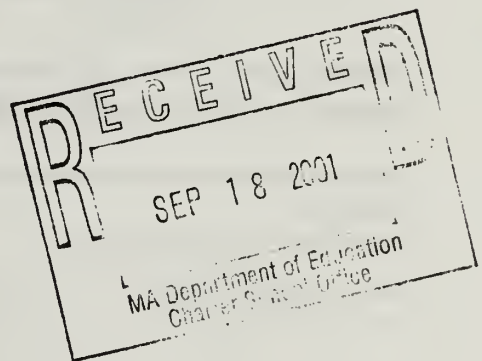
**OFFERING AN EDUCATIONAL ALTERNATIVE  
TO THE CHILDREN OF FAMILIES IN  
BERKSHIRE COUNTY**

## **PROSPECTUS**

**September 18, 2001**

***Submitted by:***

***Ric Campbell  
David Ornstil  
Ciaran McCabe***



## Charter Applicant Information Sheet

*This sheet must be attached to the prospectus and final application. Please type information.*

Name of Proposed Charter School The Greenriver School

School Address (if known) \_\_\_\_\_

School Location (City/Town) Great Barrington, MA

Name of Group Applying for the Charter Greenriver School Founding Group

Contact Person David Ornstil

Address 14 Sheffield Rd.

City Great Barrington State MA Zip 01230

Daytime Tel: (413) 528-4043 Fax: (    ) \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: Davidorn@aol.com

The proposed school will open in the fall of school year:  2002-03  2003-04

School Year	Grade Levels	Total Student Enrollment
First Year	K-8	135
Second Year	K-9	157
Third Year	K-10	179
Fourth Year	K-11	201
Fifth Year	K-12	223

*Commonwealth charter applicants only:*

Will this school be a Regional Charter School?  Yes  No

School Districts from which students are expected to come (use additional sheets if necessary):

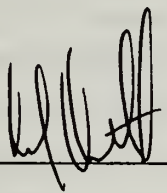
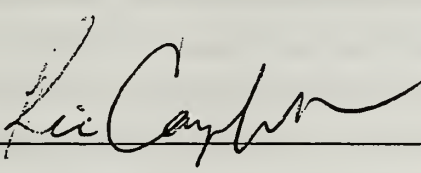
Berkshire Hills Regional	Lee	So. Berkshire Regional
Farmington River	Richmond	Lenox
	Pittsfield	

# Commonwealth Charter School Certification Statement

Proposed Charter School Name Greenciver School

Proposed School Location (City/Town) Gt. Barrington, MA

I hereby certify that the information submitted in this application is true to the best of my knowledge and belief; that this application has been or is being sent to the superintendent of all the districts from which we intend to draw students; and further I understand that, if awarded a charter, the proposed school shall be open to all students on a space available basis, and shall not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, creed, sex, ethnicity, sexual orientation, mental or physical disability, age, ancestry, athletic performance, special need, or proficiency in the English language, and academic achievement. This is a true statement, made under the penalties of perjury.

Signature of Authorized Person   Date 9/16/01

Print/Type Name DAVID ORNSTIC Ric Campbell

# GREENRIVER SCHOOL

## Executive Summary

### Mission Statement and Purposes:

Greenriver School believes that learning develops from meaningful learner interactions with the world; that every individual possesses a unique configuration of skills and knowledge that provide the basis for substantive growth in learning; and that education is responsible to the learner as individual. We believe that a school's responsibility to our democracy is to establish a culture in which individuals come to recognize and develop their own passions and predilections while participating in a collaborative community that values knowledge, inquiry, and thoughtful interactions with others. Greenriver will provide students with an education that emphasizes authentic challenges, self-reflection, and intellectual rigor in an interactive community that promotes the mastery of skills and knowledge that will allow every individual to become strategic, self-directed, successful learners.

The purpose of Greenriver School is to provide a full spectrum of public school students with an educational environment that is intellectually demanding, individually responsive, and mutually supportive. Greenriver School is an environment that prepares students for the practice of democracy by requiring their full participation in the life of the school, developing personal initiative from the self-affirmation and understanding that comes from taking responsibility for one's role in a learning community and developing an appreciation and respect for the ideas and choices of others. Greenriver is a school that honors the individual character of the learner by enacting the social reality of learning in collaborative classrooms that integrate disciplines through project based learning while reinforcing skills through authentic forms of instruction.

### Learning Standards:

- ⇒ students will be able to communicate in various contexts and across a range of disciplines.
- ⇒ students will possess a range of relevant knowledge and skills across critical disciplines.
- ⇒ students will be able to construct knowledge and engage in disciplined inquiry.
- ⇒ students will be able to read and listen to the ideas of others appreciatively and critically.
- ⇒ students will be able to acknowledge and express their own interests, ideas, and feelings.
- ⇒ students will be able to assess and take responsibility for their own understanding, effort and commitment.

### Educational Program:

- > team teaching
- > project based learning
- > authentic instruction and assessment
- > collaborative learning
- > writing as a mode of instruction
- > teacher as coach, student as learner
- > low student:teacher ratio
- > flexible scheduling (long and short blocks)
- > daily student advisory groups
- > interdisciplinary studies
- > reflective practice (students and teachers)
- > disciplined inquiry
- > performances for understanding
- > Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks as baseline
- > balanced curriculum (e.g. - art central to instruction)
- > multi-age, multi-grade groupings as appropriate
- > individual learning plans (students and teachers)
- > learner as individual, responsible for learning

## I. Charter School Mission Statement and Purposes

### Mission Statement:

Greenriver School believes that learning develops from meaningful learner interactions with the world; that every individual possesses a unique configuration of skills and knowledge that provide the basis for substantive growth in learning; and that education is responsible to the learner as individual. We believe that a school's responsibility to our democracy is to establish a culture in which individuals come to recognize and develop their own passions and predilections while participating in a collaborative community that values knowledge, inquiry, and thoughtful interactions with others. Greenriver will provide students with an education that emphasizes authentic challenges, self-reflection, and intellectual rigor in an interactive community that promotes the mastery of skills and knowledge that will allow every individual to become strategic, self-directed, successful learners.

### Purposes:

The purpose of Greenriver School is to provide a full spectrum of public school students with an educational environment that is intellectually demanding, individually responsive, and mutually supportive. At Greenriver, learning is structured as a continuous and interactive experience that is characterized by collaborative inquiry, authentic challenges, interdisciplinary projects, and meaningful assessment so that students come to recognize their own responsibility to themselves and the community as reflective individuals who can think across disciplines analytically, synthetically, and constructively and who can effectively communicate their understanding, ideas, and questions to others. Finally, Greenriver School is an environment that prepares students for the practice of democracy by requiring their full participation in the life of the school, developing personal initiative from the self-affirmation and understanding that comes from taking responsibility for one's role in a learning community and developing an appreciation and respect for the ideas and choices of others. Students are required to follow their best impulses; they are challenged to exceed their own expectations; and they are expected to work towards goals that they help to define and develop. Greenriver is a school that honors the individual character of the learner by enacting the social reality of learning in collaborative classrooms that integrate disciplines through project based learning while reinforcing skills through authentic forms of instruction.

## II. How will the school demonstrate academic success?

### *A. Learning Standards*

#### Defining the context:

Education is a broad project that promotes the development of its participants in three principal areas. As an educational environment, schools have a responsibility to help students achieve a broad range of skills and knowledge that will allow them to lead thoughtful, productive, and satisfying lives. As a social

environment, schools have a responsibility to develop those qualities that are essential to full and responsible participation in this democracy. Finally, as a primary site of developing identity and agency, schools have a responsibility to support student self-discovery leading to habits of self-reflection and self-assertion that allow individuals to make wise and appropriate choices for their own lifelong pursuits. Considering these areas of development, the learning standards can be generally divided and defined as follows.

**Please note:** *These standards are general standards. For example, the first category of "Skills and Knowledge" defines the quality of understanding expected in all those disciplines which are a part of the curriculum of Greenriver School. The particular skills and knowledge required in most disciplines are derived from the competencies described in the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks. Since our intention in grades K-8 is to make the arts (visual, performing, and manual) integral to the core curriculum, competencies for these disciplines will be necessarily broader and deeper than currently described by the Frameworks.*

#### **Skills and Knowledge:**

- ⇒ students will be able to speak, write, listen, and read for understanding in a variety of contexts and across a range of disciplines.
- ⇒ students will possess a range of knowledge and skills that are relevant; that is, usefully applicable to the demands of living in a modern, democratic society.
- ⇒ students will be able to construct knowledge within a range of disciplines. (e.g. they should be able to write as writers not just talk about the work of other writers, to hypothesize and construct/implement experimental models not just talk about the scientific method, etc.)
- ⇒ students will be able to engage in "disciplined inquiry" which means applying acquired knowledge to deepen understanding to arrive at conclusions that are characterized by "elaborated communication".\*

\* Elaborated communication is defined as knowledge expressed in the vocabulary of its native discipline. This means a student demonstrates his competence in some 'discipline' by the articulate and effective use of the language of that discipline. It requires a student to move beyond the level of comprehension necessary to surpass the kinds of challenges endemic to so many standardized tests and become a disciplinary 'practitioner' at a level appropriate to that student's level of knowledge and experience. (A Guide to Authentic Instruction and Assessment: Vision, Standards, and Scoring. Newmann, Secada, and Wehlage. Wisconsin Center for Educational Research, Madison, Wisconsin. 1995. pp. 7-13)

#### **Social behaviors:**

- ⇒ students will be able to listen to/read the ideas of others for the purpose of understanding the other's point of view, reasoning, and concerns.
- ⇒ students will be able to communicate their own point of view, reasoning, and concerns.
- ⇒ students will be able to constructively challenge the ideas of others and respond thoughtfully to the input of others regarding their own ideas.



- ⇒ students will be able to tolerate differences and value the critical thinking that is prompted by divergent perspectives.
- ⇒ students will demonstrate a concern for the learning community as a group of individuals engaged in collaborative inquiry and mutual growth.
- ⇒ students will respect the rights of others and exercise their own rights with circumspection.
- ⇒ students will participate in the decision making processes of the school that are pertinent to the community as a whole.

### **Self-knowledge**

- ⇒ students will be able to acknowledge and express their own interests, ideas, and feelings.
- ⇒ students will be able to assess their own understanding, recognizing what they know and what they need to know.
- ⇒ students will be able to assess their own effort and commitment, recognizing how effectively they have worked and how they might be able to work differently.
- ⇒ students will be able to recognize and research options and choices for their own study, work, and pleasure.
- ⇒ students will be able to take increasing responsibility for their own learning and development as they move through the Greenriver School program and into the larger/adult world. (In fact, Greenriver School aspires to be seen by all of its participants as an integral and meaningful part of the world at large.)

### ***B. Educational Program***

***“All my life I thought that learning was listening and teaching was being heard  
but now I’ve learned that teaching is listening, and learning is being heard.”***

***- Veteran Teacher***

### **Philosophy:**

At Greenriver School, there is a primary focus on the learner as individual. This means that there is recognition of differences in development, aptitudes, family background, and learning styles and that student achievement is contingent on an educational program that accommodates and works with such differences between students. Additionally, we believe that self-directed learners who apply critical habits of mind to their lives and learning become successful adults and lifelong learners. These habits are developed in an environment that challenges individuals to take increasing responsibility for themselves as thinkers and learners, where risk taking is encouraged, and where excellence is expected from everyone. It requires an environment that builds skills and knowledge through authentic and meaningful activities that engage the learner in the very challenges that are the practice of a given discipline. And, in recognizing the social nature of learning and the construction of knowledge, it is an environment that can be characterized as a community of collaborative inquiry. Finally, Greenriver School acknowledges that this perspective on

education depends on a faculty that is committed to the practice of the same principles in their own lives as teachers and learners.

### Approach:

At Greenriver, our mission is to develop successful, independent learners. This will occur to the degree that students and teachers take the fullest responsibility for defining learning goals, for assessing progress towards these goals, and for evaluating our methods along the way. There is a focus on reflective practice and individual accountability for both students and teachers so that everyone understands how they learn best, acknowledging the diversity of learning styles. For students, this means increasing responsibility for their own learning as teachers guide them through a variety of strategies for acquiring and applying knowledge. A regular habit of metacognition grounded in reflective writing and discussion will allow students to become increasingly aware of what and how they learn so that essential knowledge, habits, and skills are clearly integrated with their growing awareness of themselves as learners and thinkers.

In addition to an initial focus on the learner as individual, Greenriver approaches learning with a fourfold recognition. First, essential skills in reading and math, for instance, must be presented sequentially and teaching for mastery is critical in this regard. Second, many essential concepts and applications are best acquired through focused interactions between learners of different perspectives and varying levels of skills and abilities. Third, meaningful and connected learning happens when the learner is fully engaged in educative experiences and takes responsibility for his/her efforts. Finally, teachers must create experiences that are relevant and challenging for their students, while carefully balancing their work in the classroom between the facilitation of learning and the maintenance of standards of achievement appropriate to each learner and consistent with Greenriver expectations.

Classes will be organized to reflect these ideas so that students may be grouped homogeneously by skills levels across ages and grades for purposes of particular skills acquisitions. Students may also be grouped heterogeneously for broader purposes around thematic units in which students are engaged in exploring and applying ideas to answer essential questions or solve problems that are interdisciplinary in nature. Active advisory groups, ongoing teacher collaboration, and student input in the governance of this school will contribute to a school culture that emphasizes mutual support and the importance of individual difference. To this end, Greenriver will incorporate the following practices to guarantee a learning community that supports academic achievement and self-reflective learning:

⇒ Advisory groups averaging 10 students and an adult will meet at the beginning and end of the day throughout the academic year. These groups will begin the day with writing and discussion about a topic or concern that is central to the school and learning that will become part of a larger discussion throughout the school each day. At the end of the day, advisory will be devoted to more individual issues and reflection within the “family” group and will allow the advisor to meet with group members individually on a regular basis. The advisor becomes the primary advocate for students in his/her group and is responsible for building and maintaining communications with each student’s home.

- ⇒ Teachers will be grouped in teaching teams that meet on a daily basis. Their work includes the planning and implementation of curriculum and teacher research that examines how effectively the classroom environment is helping students move towards educational goals. This ongoing reflective practice will prompt teachers to modify curriculum and teaching strategies as they are indicated by this collaborative work.
- ⇒ These meetings establish a practice of examining student work and progress to deepen understanding of learning issues and better serve our learners. Each teacher will present a student profile (or two, depending on the kind of issues involved) to the group for discussion. This will allow three things happen. Teachers will be able to examine learning issues collaboratively, the presenting teacher can develop insights and plans for helping the student further, and the other teachers will come to see ways they might contribute to the student's progress. In this way, teachers broaden and deepen their awareness of learner issues and improve their teaching in the process. (This team approach to looking at individual students has been a common practice of The DOOR: A Center for Alternatives since its inception in the early 1970's.)
- ⇒ Student:teacher ratios averaging 12:1 in all classes will allow instruction to emphasize interactions between all class members and increased teacher/student contact.
- ⇒ Emphasis in instruction will reflect Coalition of Essential Schools and Paideia notions of student as worker and teacher as coach/mentor.
- ⇒ Greenriver recognizes the important role of the teacher as learner, exemplifying the very habits of mind we wish to inculcate in our students, and the importance of skills such as active listening, responsive feedback, and scaffolding in a pedagogy that builds critical thinking skills. It is essential that teachers as "experts" in their disciplines are able to articulate their understanding in a variety of ways and demonstrate the very erudition and clarity we expect of our students. Towards this goal, Greenriver faculty will use a variety of strategies such as goal setting or peer and student evaluations to hone these skills in the classroom.
- ⇒ In this regard, it is essential that the school leader be a competent and experienced teacher. To this end, the Director of School will provide instructional leadership, taking on some instructional responsibilities as well as bringing years of classroom experience to Greenriver. (The Paideia Proposal, Mortimer J. Adler. Macmillan Publishing Company, New York, NY. 1982.)
- ⇒ Professional connections to local colleges (Simon's Rock College, Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts, Berkshire Community College) and their faculty will allow teachers to continue to grow within their own disciplines. Additionally, partnerships with education faculty at universities like the State University at Albany and the Harvard Graduate School of Education will be pursued, allowing us to become a site for educational research. The project of the Greenriver School is to translate current educational theory into classroom practice and to validate what constitutes 'best practices' through thoughtful research.
- ⇒ The regular practice of writing within the classroom to develop ideas, explore questions, express feelings, and reflect on learning and ourselves as learners will play a central role in instruction. This

recognizes the role of literacy in critical thinking and the function of language as the common and fundamental ground for the sharing and development of ideas. This notion of writing that leads to competent thinking while fostering a classroom culture that acknowledges individual ideas and validates the social processes that lead to the creation of knowledge is reflected in the work of the Institute for Writing and Thinking at Bard College.

- ⇒ The curriculum will be integrated across disciplines, developing the very real connections that exist between different ways of looking at the world, and will avoid as much as possible the kind of arbitrary separation that currently lead students to think, for example, that the logic of mathematics has no place in the English composition class. Additionally, it is important to acknowledge that prior to high school, Greenriver does not give preference to the 'core' disciplines common to most schools. Instead, curriculum planning and instructional approaches give balanced emphasis to all disciplines so that areas such as the expressive arts are not peripheral to the enterprise of learning. We recognize, for instance, that architecture and the visual arts are an important and powerful way of understanding history and civilization; that scientific understanding often begins in metaphor; and that music instructs as well as entertains. To this end, teaching teams will include teachers who are artists who will not only provide instruction in their own disciplines but also collaborate in curriculum and instructional design and implementation.
- ⇒ Local organizations and individuals will also play a role in curricular opportunities. Shakespeare and Company and Jacob's Pillow, for example, will be looked to for educational contributions in their areas of expertise. The Berkshire region is well represented by artists of various kinds whom we hope to involve in critical ways with our daily teaching practices.
- ⇒ Using the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks as benchmarks for learning, instruction will be designed to serve the individual needs of the student and will include interdisciplinary investigations and problem based learning. The use of essential questions and challenge based education will provide thematic focus to large curriculum blocks that engage students in the integration and synthesis of knowledge across disciplines, reflecting a "real world" use of learning. Tie-ins to the community become important in these contexts, importing community members to participate in educational activities and exporting students to workplaces and facilities outside the school to learn "first hand" about practical applications and concepts. Core knowledge and skills will be taught within more focused instructional blocks as appropriate.
- ⇒ The daily use of time becomes an important consideration. The schedule will allow for long-block scheduling, rotation of instructional times, and advisory periods to meet the needs of the students and the demands of the curriculum. Shorter periods of time that support tutorials and intensive small group work will also be an essential part of Greenriver for purposes of remediation and forms of independent study.
- ⇒ As students move into high school, Greenriver will expand its programs and alliances with local colleges will permit students to pursue course work that is aligned with their future interests while complementing the academic program at Greenriver. Students with interests in areas of study and practice that are non-academic in nature, such as carpentry or auto mechanics, will be supported in

developing an appropriate program for their future interests. Apprenticeships within the community will provide critical learning experiences and courses, such as small business management, will be integral to continued academic studies towards graduation.

⇒ Finally, each student and teacher will be involved in developing a Personal Learning Plan (PLP) that defines learning goals, develops self-knowledge, and determines some of the assessment strategies necessary to determine if goals have been reached. These PLP's will be used actively throughout the year and revised as necessary. The PLP is integral to instructional planning and documents student learning during the course of the student's academic year. Both students and teachers will be required to have such plans.

### *C. Performance Standards*

What standards do we set for our students? We expect our students to grow maximally; we believe this challenge will carry them beyond the performance expectations of standardized tests which are able to assess only a narrow range of skills and abilities. (Though Greenriver recognizes the importance of the kinds of learning that lead to success on such challenges and incorporates experiences within the curriculum that answer to these demands.) Our performance standards begin with the benchmarks provided by the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks but go beyond them in various respects. The use of developmental portfolios and extended performances of understanding provide a means of assessing progress and a method of continual self-improvement that support student growth while delineating student progress.\* Mastery of the curricular challenges is the minimum standard for all students.

The consequences when that standard is not achieved are simple. The student will continue to work towards mastery. The two principal forms of assessment are criterion referenced assessments that rely on rubrics to define the criteria. But the highly reflective nature of these assessments and the diagnostic implications of the rubrics help clarify areas of strength and weakness so that teacher and student are able to prescribe the work that needs to be done to achieve mastery. The standards remain the same throughout a learning sequence but the two primary forms of assessment are recursive throughout a curriculum cycle. A student knows where he/she is heading from the beginning and the teacher is able to coach and remediate along the way. Since every student will have a PLP, this will contextualize the meaning of mastery in different ways depending on the individual so that the performance expectations will differ among students but the minimum standard of mastery will not be abridged for any student. The guiding belief that all students can attain to this level and the innovative focus on the individual that is fundamental to Greenriver's design constitute the mission of this school.

Similarly, teachers are expected to be experts in their respective fields, reflective in their pedagogy, committed to their students, collaborative in their work with other teachers, and attentive to the classroom environment as the ground of learning experiences. Only the first of these standards is demonstrated in any substantive way prior to their career at Greenriver since disciplinary expertise is acquired through prior education. Reflective practice must be demonstrated through ongoing dialogue with

fellow teachers and the director of education and is substantiated by the PLP that is visited and revised as necessary throughout the year. Built into the PLP are written reflections and other modes of self-assessment that indicate commitment to students and the kinds of planning and thinking about the classroom that honor the pedagogical responsibility for creating experiences that promote student growth. Collaborative work is integral to our work at Greenriver and a teacher who is unable to work with others in shaping and reshaping their own ideas about education and their work as a teacher will be unable to work at Greenriver. This is not to say that teachers cannot have divergent opinions. On the contrary, it is the critical differences and conflicts of individual perceptions and ideas that allow each of us to rethink our own views and revisit our beliefs in ways that deepen our understanding and efficacy as teachers.

*\* Performances of understanding is an adaptation of David Perkins's idea of "understanding performances". Perkins describes these performances as discrete acts that demonstrate comprehension. (Smart Schools, David Perkins. The Free Press, New York, NY. 1992. pp. 75-79) I use the term to denote a final exhibition that may include any one or all of the performances that Perkins describes but it is performance as a broad final project. It is what the Coalition of Essential Schools calls an "exhibition" but this term, isolated from defining contexts, connotes performance without the requirement of understanding. The goal of a performance of understanding is the construction of new knowledge and understanding performances are necessarily implicit to such constructions. It is a form of authentic assessment as described by Newmann et al. (see above)*

#### *D. Assessment system*

##### Rationale and general assessment plan:

At Greenriver, we recognize that how we assess indicates how we value and that what we assess demonstrates what we value. Certain kinds of knowledge are best acquired as discrete facts, data that must be committed to memory but reinforced in relevant applications. Consequently, these kinds of knowledge can be assessed as attributes of memory through fairly standard testing procedures. But the most important qualities of intelligence and learning that we set as goals for our students are not so easily evaluated. The ability to construct knowledge, to engage in disciplined inquiry, and to communicate understanding to others effectively constitutes an integrated complex of skills and knowledge that cannot be easily assessed by conventional methods. But it is the development of these abilities which is the hallmark of an education that prepares individuals for the complex demands of the modern world. With the exception of standardized tests, which allow us to gauge student learning against state and national standards, the bulk of the assessment protocols serve the educational purposes of Greenriver more directly, helping us not only to assess student progress in relation to program goals but also to evaluate the efficacy of the programs themselves.

Thus, the range of assessments necessary to our goals are as follows:

- **State level assessments:** All students will participate in the MCAS testing program as mandated. Since the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks provide critical guidance for Greenriver curriculum design, the MCAS allows us to monitor student progress in the acquisition of certain skills and knowledge that are central to Massachusetts educational goals.
- **Standardized assessments:** All students will participate in assessments such as the California Achievement Tests which are used by neighboring districts. These tests allow us to compare learning results at Greenriver to local schools with similar populations while providing us with critical comparisons to national norms. It also provides Greenriver with critical data about basic skills and knowledge of our students during cycles when the MCAS is not administered. This will contribute to the development of the Personal Learning Plan (PLP).
- **Classroom based diagnostic and achievement assessments:** Teacher developed and other selected tests will evaluate student learning and inform instructional design. These tests will be administered to evaluate particular skills in reading, writing, and math and to assess fundamental content knowledge in all disciplines.
- **Observational data:** Anecdotal records, teacher observations, and focused teacher-student interactions will form narratives that describe attributes of the learner within the educational environment. These assessments provide a more detailed picture of learner progress, important diagnostic information that informs instructional approaches, and aspects of understanding within a discipline that are not so effectively revealed by standardized tests.
- **Portfolio assessments:** These will be developed by teachers for two basic purposes. Within a learning unit, students will maintain developmental portfolios in which they collect work over time that demonstrates growth in language and abilities. Note taking done while researching a topic, the drafts of an essay, the metacognitive field notes that reveal questions and transitions along the way are some of the kind of elements that will be included in such a portfolio. This assemblage of materials will be assessed by rubric and provides important indicators of student progress while increasing student self-awareness. The variety of student work in such portfolios provides evidence of the efficacy of pedagogy as well as revealing student strengths and weaknesses. The second, Demonstration portfolios become repositories of 'finished' pieces, final work that reflects the results of the students' best efforts. These kinds of portfolios provide the same kinds of information as 'standardized tests' though qualified by different time constraints.
- **Authentic assessments:** Students will be engaged in a variety of exhibitions, demonstrations, and problem based projects. Rubrics will be developed collaboratively by staff, students, and community as the primary evaluation tools for these performance based assessments. These rubrics evaluate knowledge within a cluster of disciplines and range of critical skills, helping students and teachers recognize strengths and weaknesses in student learning and program efficacy. These 'tests' are essential to the work of all the teachers and students at Greenriver School. They demonstrate the mastery of essential skills and knowledge at appropriate stages along the way.

### III. How will the school demonstrate organizational viability?

#### *A. Market Analysis*

##### 1. Statement of need:

Greenriver School is needed in Berkshire County for a variety of reasons. The first answer is necessarily broad because it addresses a broader educational concern. There is a growing recognition that the public schools are failing at their task. The spread of high stakes standardized testing across the country is one significant symptom of this concern. Teachers respond to these initiatives with mixed thoughts. Most teachers recognize and accept the importance of rigorous standards but are concerned about the quality of education that serves these tests within the current infrastructure of our schools. That is, the first response of moving towards an extrinsically motivated, product oriented, pass or perish educational ethos is a response that increases the very alienation that makes students see schooling as something that serves interests other than their own. The relevancy of education to a student's life experiences is compromised; the authentic challenges and satisfaction of the acquisition and application of knowledge is sacrificed.

Greenriver School is needed not only in Berkshire County but across the State of Massachusetts. In the General Laws of Massachusetts, Chapter 71, Section 89, the purposes of charter schools are explained in article (d) as seven fundamental guidelines. Greenriver School answers to every one of these purposes and six of these seven purposes have to do with various aspects of innovative, accountable performance-based education. This is clearly the mission and design of Greenriver School. Talking with teachers about educational concerns, most of them will articulate educational ideals that are difficult to disagree with but they will also explain the reasons why these ideals are not consistently evident as the principles of daily classroom practice. Large classes, time constraints, lack of professional community, student apathy, insufficient control over the conditions of learning are just some of the issues that teachers bring up. Greenriver School seeks to remove these 'excuses' and build a program that is aligned with our best principles, that allows theory to inform practice, and that works reflectively - continually developing, implementing and researching practices - to develop an educational environment that provides the experiences that allow our children to become competent thinkers and responsive citizens. At Greenriver, we not only remove perceived constraints but more importantly recognize that teachers need to work differently with students. Our plan for teacher collaboration, teaching teams, and staff development and accountability gets at the one set of issues that teachers are often less prone to lay claim to - how teaching needs to change and how teachers need to be learning as continuously as their students.

The third purpose in this section of the General Laws addresses the need "to provide parents and students with greater options in choosing schools." In Berkshire County, parent dissatisfaction with local schools has been apparent for many years and recent meetings held in Great Barrington have gathered together a growing group of parents who are willing to work actively to bring this alternative to western Massachusetts. Outreach has been minimal so far, yet already we have received a lot of positive responses



and active support for this educational initiative. But Greenriver School strives to be a truly 'public school' and outreach to all parts of Berkshire County will be actively pursued to insure that our student population is diverse and representative.

Finally, we must consider the youth-related problems in Berkshire County. Adolescent suicide rates and substance abuse statistics in Berkshire County are high compared to statewide data. Berkshire County has a higher rate of admissions to drug/alcohol treatment programs than the rest of the state. Educational issues are possibly related to these problems. Students who are entering educational institutions after high school graduation are not being successful; they are leaving programs before completion, often in their first or second year. Other statistics add to this picture. Mt. Everett (of Southern Berkshire Regional School District), for example, reported that 25% of its 8th grade students sought other educational options as they moved into high school. In 1995, only 56% of 9th grade students graduated with their class. We will be updating these statistics and similar data for the seven school districts that will be served by Greenriver School. These are problems that Greenriver hopes to address because they are problems that seem to indicate a population of young citizens who are disenfranchised for a variety of reasons. It would seem that an educational program that honors individual students, that values student thinking and concerns, and that helps students develop intellectually in ways that build on their own passions and proclivities in a collaborative community is an educational program that builds connections rather than disconnections, self-initiative rather than helplessness and <sup>a</sup>lived sense <sup>a</sup>f community participation and support rather than isolation and the rejection of common social responsibilities.

## ***B. School Governance and Management***

### **1. Capacity:**

Four years ago, a coalition of educators and parents submitted an application for a charter school called the Greenriver Regional Charter School. This group grew out of a series of meetings of concerned educators in Berkshire County. Teachers knew that the schools could be doing more but were failing to support educational initiatives that experienced teachers recognized as essential to student development. The final application for that school was ranked ninth of 63 final candidates but only eight schools were approved in the 1997-98 application cycle.

Two members of that initial group, David Ornstil and Ric Campbell, decided to apply again and began soliciting support by holding meetings with concerned educators and parents within the southern Berkshire County community. Ric's interest in a charter school evolved from deep convictions about what was educationally possible after 22 years of teaching and teacher leadership. Ric became increasingly frustrated at being unable to implement lasting structural changes in the public schools. His abiding concern that most public schools are not serving the needs of students or society in important ways has led him to submit this charter school application once again.

David has been equally concerned with the ways that schools serve their students. His concern developed from his own experiences as a parent of three children and as an active member of school committees. His experience in business and finance allowed him to see how budgets set priorities for school programs and that the public schools could be using their funds more directly and efficiently to serve the purposes of education better.

Ciaran McCabe has joined the group as a parent of four children who has been unhappy with the ways in which the public schools fail to honor the individual learner. His own children have been home schooled during cycles of their educational lives and Ciaran continues to be closely involved with the schools as his youngest children continue to participate in local school programs. Ciaran joined this initiative because of connections with Ric Campbell who helped in the home schooling of his children for a few years.

Summaries of the experience and qualifications of these three founding members follows.

**Ric Campbell** - *founder, board member, director of school.*

Ric has been teaching for over twenty-two years. He is currently a doctoral candidate at Harvard Graduate School of Education and a Senior Fellow for Programming and Outreach to Schools at the Institute for Writing and Thinking at Bard College. He began his career as an elementary school teacher, later worked in alternative settings with at-risk populations in New York City, and was a high school English teacher and New York State teacher of Regents Earth Science and Biology for more than seven years prior to returning to graduate school.

**Ciaran McCabe** - *founder, board member.*

Ciaran has been self-employed in the field of marketing communications for many years. He joins the founding group with a long standing interest and commitment to educational issues that developed as his own four children have moved through their own schooling experiences. The inability of the public school to work effectively with his children has prompted Ciaran and his wife, Catherine, to seek alternatives to public education on numerous occasions. Ciaran has been involved with education in a variety of capacities as Staff Leader, New York Junior Yearly Meeting, Religious Society of Friends, High School Senior Program; Founding Member, The Eagle Fund, Southern Berkshire Regional School District (SBRSD); Member, Janet's Fund Committee, SBRSD; and Board Member, Railroad Street Youth Project, Great Barrington.

**David Ornstil** - *founder, board member, director of business administration.*

David ran his own business for over twenty years as a member/market maker on the Pacific Stock Exchange option floor. His volunteer experience includes eight years on the Board of Directors of the Jewish Community Center of San Francisco. During his term, he chaired the finance committee as well as the capital campaign committee. In Great Barrington, Massachusetts, David was a member of the Undermountain Elementary School Council and served for three years on the Southern Berkshire School Committee for the town of Egremont. During his tenure, he served on subcommittees for finance, labor

negotiations, technology, and curriculum, as well as principal and superintendent search committees. David has also served on the State School Committee on Special Education.

## 2. Organizational Structure:

Greenriver School's governance plan is structured to guarantee that the school is responsive to the central concerns of its educational mission. To maximize student achievement, students, teachers, and the larger community need to be integral to the decision making process. All parties must have a legitimate voice in the school's direction to guarantee sensitivity to a range of concerns and responsive commitment to all aspects of the school's success. The governance plan maintains some conventional hierarchies of decision making but the decisions should be understood as choices that reflect a response to the ideas and concerns of all of the school's constituents.

Greenriver School governing groups and individuals will have defined areas of responsibilities with a strong focus on collaboration. The founding group will construct a board of trustees that will adhere to the school philosophy and mission statement . The Director of School and Director of Business Administration will have complementary responsibilities in managing the school. There are two critical aspects in creating and maintaining a successful school A school program must be shaped by a coherent vision of education and learning but this program requires an equally coherent fiscal plan that will allow ideas to become realities, theories <sup>to</sup> become practices, and growth to continue as the school population increases, building costs rise, and faculty salaries respond to economic changes. The division of labor for these two key individuals are spelled out below.

### **Director of School**

The Director will have primary responsibility for managing the educational program of the school. This includes hiring and firing of all classroom personnel, providing leadership for the development and implementation of educational programs, and overseeing issues of school culture and disciplinary matters. The supervision and ongoing evaluation of faculty is also the Director's responsibility which includes the facilitation of staff development throughout the year. The Director will also support grant development, facilitate the School Council, and develop the school budget with the Director of Business Administration. The Director is the primary spokesperson for school policy and educational program and is responsible to the Board of Trustees, reporting on academic progress and issues at each monthly meeting and bringing concerns for the Board's consideration. With the Director of Business Administration, the Director will develop the annual report on school progress for the State of Massachusetts. Finally, the Director will serve as a faculty member to a student advisory group and will take on some classroom teaching responsibility during the school year.

### **Director of Business Administration**

This individual will be responsible for the day to day financial operation of the school, including program costs, maintenance and physical plant expenses, purchasing and transportation matters, payroll,

special education costs, grant management, and leadership in fundraising ventures. The Director of Business Administration will develop the school budget with the Director of School in collaboration with the Board of Trustees and will report to the Board on financial matters at their monthly meetings. This Director will be responsible for the hiring and firing of non-instructional personnel. With the Director of School, the Director will develop the annual report on school progress for the State of Massachusetts. Finally, the Director will serve as a faculty member to a student advisory group and will take on some classroom teaching responsibility during the school year.

### **The Board of Trustees**

This governing group will be made up of ten to twelve individuals including educators, parents, and community members. Among the parent and community members we will be looking to recruit individuals with an interest in the school who will contribute particular skills and experience in to this educational project. Legal, financial, business, and scientific expertise, for example will contribute to the long term success of the school. The Board will meet monthly to discuss educational and fiscal matters as well as insuring that school development adheres to the goals of its mission statement while meeting state and federal educational guidelines as well as legal and fiduciary responsibilities. The Board will oversee the school budget; elect its own chairperson, treasurer, and secretary; and form appropriate subcommittees as necessary to examine budgetary and educational initiatives. The chairperson of the Board will act as a key spokesperson for the school, responding to public concerns as they arise.

### **School Council**

This decision making body will consist of parents, teachers, students, and other community members. The Council will act in an advisory capacity to the Director of School, providing critical feedback and dialogue that will contribute to the continuous development of programs and educational initiatives. This group will not only report directly to the Director of School but will also meet with the Director of Business Administration as appropriate. They will also provide ideas and initiatives for consideration by the Board of Trustees.

### **Faculty Committee**

Consisting of the teaching faculty, this group will develop and implement curriculum and curriculum related programs. They will contribute to the development of discipline and related policies, the planning of assessments and goals for staff development, and manage the work of teaching teams. The Faculty Committee will appoint three faculty members to the Board of Trustees. They will report directly to the Director of School.

Organizational Chart:  
THE STRUCTURE OF GOVERNANCE

AT GREENRIVER SCHOOL

